

WELLINGTON (Somerset)
URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

ANNUAL REPORT

✠ FOR 1898, ✠

BY DR. J. MEREDITH,

Medical Officer of Health.

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BY DR. J. MEREDITH,

Medical Officer of Health.

To the Chairman of the Wellington (Somerset)
Urban District Council.

26th January, 1899.

Sir,—I have the honour to forward my annual report of the health and sanitary condition of the Urban Sanitary District of Wellington for the year 1898.

The period has been on the whole uneventful. There has been no outbreak of zymotic disease and there has been in this connection very little to communicate to the Council at the time of the regular meetings.

Deaths.—From the Registrar's return it will be seen that 120 persons died during the year. Fifteen of these deaths took place in the Union Workhouse. Seven out of this number were deaths of persons not belonging to the Urban District of Wellington. The whole of these outsiders were aged or infirm persons sent to the Workhouse for ordinary care and nursing which could not be secured for them at their own homes. The death rate equalled 16·42 per thousand persons living. Deducting the deaths of eleven persons who did not belong to the district the rate is reduced to a fraction under 15 per 1000. Eighteen out of the total of deaths were those of children under one year, as against 22 for the year 1897. Last year the infant death rate was 105·26 per thousand births, against 138·8 for the year before. Ten persons died between the ages of one year and five ; none died between the ages of five and 15 ; three between 15 and 25 ; 34 between 25 and 65 ; and 55 aged 65 and upwards. There were no deaths from any of the continued fevers. Four children succumbed to whooping cough complicated with bronchitis. There were many cases of this disease in the district during the early

spring. Seven persons died from diarrhoea and dysentery (five of them were children under five years of age) nearly all taking place during the summer and autumn months. Two deaths were due to rheumatic fever, seven to phthisis, 15 to bronchitis, pneumonia and pleurisy, 17 to heart disorders. Nine persons died from influenza and its complications during January and February, when the illness was prevalent in the district. They were all feeble or aged people. One death resulted from injury and 58 from all other diseases, giving a total as stated of 120.

Births.—There have been 171 births, equal to 23.40 per thousand inhabitants.

Notifications.—I received four notices under the Infectious Diseases (Notification) Act, 1889. Three of these were of erysipelatous nature, and the fourth was notified as scarlet fever. There was no extension of this ailment and no call arose for further notice.

Water.—Several wells were examined on account of suspicions arising as to the quality of the water in them. In most instances these wells were closed and the town water was laid on to supply their places. In all, 49 additional houses, including the common lodging house, were supplied by the town water during the year. Notwithstanding the prolonged dry weather, experienced during the summer, the spring supplying the town remained practically unaffected. A great deal of waste was found to be going on at different houses during the dry period. As many as 24 taps were found to be defective, and the Council caused notices to be issued urging persons to be more careful and economical in the use of water. It has frequently happened that houses situated on the higher elevations have been short of water for many hours. With the view of obviating this, the Council are constructing a water tower as a reserve tank at a conspicuous elevation on the south side of the town. This auxiliary tank, no doubt, will be ready before the summer. On two or three occasions the spring head was polluted by inrush of storm water from the adjoining stream, but measures have been taken to prevent, it is hoped, such accidents in the future. In a few cases efforts were made to protect the water in the wells from surface pollution, where this had taken place, by improving the surroundings and repairing defective coverings.

Sewage.—In reference to sewerage the Council have taken a forward action during the year. A sub-committee of the members visited and examined the working of plans of sewage disposal in various towns in the country and as an outcome of the information collected an experimental filtration bed is being constructed and is now near completion. The Surveyor informs me that the filtering bed belongs to the bacteriological order of things. According to the best accounts obtained there is every reason to expect that the experiment will succeed and will justify full adoption of the method.

Adoption of Acts.—The Infectious Disease (Prevention) Act, 1890, 53-54, Vic., c. 34, and the Public Health Acts Amendment Act, 1890, 53-54, Vic., cap. 59, were adopted by the Council and are now in operation in the district.

Inspections.—The course adopted last year in regard to inspection was the same as that of former years—the Sanitary Inspector and I visiting places sometimes together, at other times separately. We examined the bakeries and slaughter houses and did not find much to notice.

Pigs.—The attention of the Council was called five times to persons keeping pigs within prohibited boundaries, or in a filthy condition, causing nuisances. In all instances the matters complained of were remedied. The question of pig-keeping within the town is still some way from being in an agreeable and satisfactory state, although it is not such a great and general nuisance as it used to be a few years ago. I think that one is not too sanguine in expressing a hope that pigs shall be prohibited in the central part of the town altogether, or near dwellings and places of common resort.

Manure.—Complaints had also to be made of manure heaps, stale pig wash kept in casks near back doors, faulty drains and ejects, with other matters of the like nature, all being attended to in due course and the nuisances arising therefrom abated.

W.C's.—Several nuisances arising from choked closets have been reported, followed after notice by abatement of cause of complaint.

Nuisances.—In June I had to report to the Council a state of things—once very common in the town, now happily but rarely met with—at a

dwelling business house, where there were two untrapped drain inlets on the ground floor with free escape of sewer air straight from the main. A like state of things existed upstairs, where sewer air escaped freely into the sleeping apartments through the rain water and down soil pipes. The closet was of the old D trap and container arrangement and a source of nuisance in itself. There can be no excuse for having this description of latrine arrangement in any house now. It is expensive, faulty, and always dangerous. As in this instance it is accountable for much non-descript malaise and sickness. Another aggravated nuisance I had to report upon in November—that of neglect of children, and whose condition was such that the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to children took legal proceedings in the case.

Dairies.—The Sanitary Inspector as inspector of dairies and cowsheds has made reports to the Council during the year and in eight instances issued notices to persons in the trade regarding matters in which their premises were in default. There have been no cases brought to notice in which milk has in any instance been suspected of causing illness or any formal complaint as to quality.

Rainfall.—The rainfall of the year, as already reported, amounted to 29·42 inches, being about three inches under average.

Scavenging.—The scavenging work of the town has been carried on with regularity as in former years.

Tramps.—1960 vagrants took advantage of the casual wards of the Union Workhouse last year. 1767 of them were men, 133 women, and 60 children. This only represents a portion, but possibly the greater portion of these sort of wayfarers who pass annually through the district. Many put up at the common lodging house and many more take shelter at the Poole brick kilns, but at neither place is any record kept of the numbers. I occasionally inspected those staying at the Workhouse wards, but there has been no one amongst them that required to be detained on account of infectious illness.

I have had the Inspector's books before me again in preparing my report, as in former years. —I have the honor to be, Sir, Your obedient Servant, JOHN MEREDITH, M.D., Medical Officer of Health, Wellington, Somerset.

